

TTR Heaven! (Or trail riding in the Andalucian Mountains)

My brother Trev and I decided a few months ago that we would like to do one of the foreign trail riding weekends whose advertisements are now plastered across the pages of TBM each month. We wanted to go somewhere warm and dry with some mountain going to see if we could overcome our vertigo!

Mel's review of the Spanish tours in June's TBM wetted the appetite and we plumped for ToroTrail (www.torotrail.co.uk) mainly because they are the only tour company I have seen flying the TTR250 flag but more of that later.

ToroTrail is run by Lyndon Foster ably assisted by spanner man and sweeper John and is based in a town called Alhaurin El Grande, 20mins drive from Malaga airport in Southern Spain. They cater for novice through to expert rider, tailoring routes to rider ability. They have hundreds of miles of rocky climbs, fire roads, woodland trails, stream bed routes and crossings **and** not a gate or angry landowner in sight!

Our flight from Exeter was short and sweet and it wasn't long before we were in a local bar meeting our fellow riders. A group of 4 lads (Spud, Tim, & brothers Nick and Adam) from Teesside (not pleased to be called the Geordie Boys but it was a good wind up!). Another 5 from Surrey (Martyn, Alan, another Trevor, John and Alan – all Surrey TRF members) plus Steve, an absolute novice who had made the trip on his own looking for an alternative to increasingly dangerous life on a GiXer.

I have to say at this point if anyone new to trail riding is looking for some practice and off-road experience, then this could be the way to go. It was an eye opener to me how well Lyndon & John tutored Steve and built his confidence so quickly. I think the rest of us also learnt a bit in terms of climbing and descending hills, using footpegs and sitting properly etc.

Steve, Trev and I were lucky to be allocated bed space at ToroTrail base Finca Montanech but the other guys found their hotel accommodation in town to be good quality plus had their breakfast made for them!

The cast of players:



The "Geordie Boys" and first-timer Steve - from left to right Spud (the trials king), Steve, Tim, & brothers Nick and Adam



Surrey TRF guys - Martyn, Andy, trailmeister Lyndon, spannerman John, Trevor and my brother Trev

The following morning was interesting as we were all togged out in our riding gear and sussing out who was who and trying to get a rough idea of skill levels and how on earth a group of 14 would work! We were all kitted out in blue MSR jackets, Nitro helmets and Alpinestar trousers and riding blue TTR250s, so it was a bit difficult working out who was who amongst the sea of blue other than by number plates! Camelbaks filled with bottled water were also supplied – absolutely essential in the heat. I think we went at a good time as Spain starts to cool down by mid-September and we didn't really suffer from the heat.

An excellent idea was the use of an inter-rider communication set-up. We all had mobile receivers and ear pieces so that Lyndon could talk to us on the trail to warn of hazards and give directions etc. It also gave him two-way communications with John at the rear of the group. This saved a few mishaps over the weekend I am sure.

I had a bit of special treatment as Lyndon had recently discovered my ttr250.com website and had joined TTR250 Yahoo forum. He had reserved the "Special" for me. This was a TTR that he had got tuned by a local hotshot race mechanic with hot cam, skimmed head, worked valves, bigger carb etc. I swapped bikes with Trev during the weekend and Trev enjoyed the extra oomph although it has to be said that it was losing quite a bit of power as it had been set up on a dyno with an FMF silencer but Lyndon had put the standard box back on because the FMF was just too loud.

By the time we were kitted out, had our safety talk and petrolled up it was about 11.30am and we were looking forward to getting onto the trails.

The first day was a heady mix of going which seemed very similar to Exmoor and Quantocks but with hardly a muddy rut in sight. Lots of quick gravel fire roads, off-route “playgrounds”, a long rocky/sandy river bed trail, multiple river crossings, hill climbs and steep descents. Having read a report from a previous customer who regretted not trying all the optional challenges, Trev and I did everything on offer and succeeded in making all the climbs – not always that elegantly though!



Tim taking a well-deserved breather at the end of the tricky river bed trail – the only mud we experienced the whole weekend!



Trev climbing the “Grim Reaper” in style – it was steeper than it looks in the pic but very do-able and great fun

Lunch was at a smart Anglophile hangout, the Marbella Gun Club near Monda, and it seemed odd that 14 sweaty, muddy (yes – they had rain for 2 days before we arrived and the river bed trail actually still had some wet mud in places!) bikers in full riding regalia were made so welcome. The chicken and bacon baguette hit the spot, the Camelbaks were topped up and off we went again for more dirty fun.

Back to base at about 5pm and, after a shower and a virtuoso heavy metal (loud!) guitar solo from Metallica wannabe Lyndon, he took us into town for some well-deserved beers at the Zeppelin bar where we were entertained by a live metal band and then on to a great restaurant where we had a terrific meal al fresco.

The second day found us all a little more relaxed and a bit of an earlier start. Lyndon took us further afield riding at a good pace and the day included some aptly named challenges such as the Canyon, Mordor, the Grim Reaper and the Geordie Way. A trail that everyone enjoyed was a long, very steep and rocky single track path which took us to a mast as high up as I ever really wanted to be but with great photo opportunities.

Mordor was an optional challenge and is by the hotel at which the ill-fated El Dorado soap was based and has been successfully climbed by only 3 ToroTrail riders: John our Spannerman, Steve Ireland (creator of the Tough One and GB Hare scrambles) and, to great applause, our own riding companion Spud. A couple of brave Surrey lads tried and did well to get a third of the way up – coming down was very scary apparently – it certainly looked it!



Trev completing a tricky climb.



Entrance to the Canyon was a 20ft near vertical drop but what a great playground!

After a breather and another great lunch at the Gun Club, Lyndon took us way up into the mountains and as we wound our way around the hill side, we had constant reminders in our earpieces to ride safely as there was little

room for error with huge drop-offs on each left-hand bend! I wish I had taken the GPS to see where we had traveled but I think the farthest west we got was at a viewing point high up on a dirt road overlooking Marbella.

The second day finished with a play along a wide flat river bed with lots of opportunities to soak and be soaked – a great way to have fun and cool off. At the end of this trail was a motocross practice track that some of the guys who still had energy had a good play on whilst the rest of us chilled in the shade of a road bridge. We then rode back to base, got cleaned up and headed out for another night of good company, (too much) cold beer and superb food.

I have no idea of the distances covered as I forgot to look at my speedo but I recollect Lyndon saying we had covered about 75 miles on day 2 so I am guessing we did less, about 65 miles on day one. Plenty enough for Trev and I though!



Me trying to look relaxed atop the mountain view point amongst the sea of blue.



Trev taking it easy on the edge of a precipice! So much for the vertigo eh?

As perhaps the TTR250's number one fan, I was delighted to hear the compliments about how well the TTRs performed over the weekend and this was from KTM450, WR450F etc riders. The bikes ran faultlessly with not a single running repair being necessary. John said that they would be power washed, chains adjusted and oiled and be ready for the next tour in two days time. He didn't think that any other bike could put up with such abuse and keep going with so little work and such a low maintenance regime. More riding and less spannering!

I was surprised and delighted at how both Lyndon and John still loved their biking after running tours for 18 months and tens of thousands of trail miles with some "interesting" customers along the way. Their enthusiasm for trail riding and commitment to giving a good customer experience shone through.

All in all a brilliant weekend with good riding, unrivalled scenery, beautiful weather, no muddy ruts, bike-friendly locals and a great group of people to ride with - thoroughly recommended!

Brian Sussex

[YAMAHA TTR250 TRAIL and OFFROAD MOTORCYCLE FAQ](http://ttr250.com) at ttr250.com

Footnotes:

The weekend was a practical confirmation for me as to how sturdy and capable the TTR250 is. Lyndon currently runs 100% TTRs and you can take it from me that his bikes get some heavy duty treatment from both novice and experienced trail riders alike yet seem unburstable.

Some tips:

- Lyndon runs Ultra Heavy Duty 4mm Michelin inner tubes at about 19lbs pressure. Proof of how resilient these are was that 14 bikes were run at a fair rate over rocky trails etc and not a single puncture over the weekend.
- The standard steel bars are replaced by Renthals and in 18 months not one has been bent despite the many spills.
- Acerbis hand guards with ally inserts have so far meant that only one lever has broken – and this was on Lyndon's bike ;-)
- Lyndon can get a season out of his chains and sprockets – he uses Tsubaki MX Alpha MX O Ring Chain ref 520MXA-118, Renthal 13 tooth front sprockets 342A-520-13P, and 48 tooth Renthal Yamaha Ultra-Lite rear sprockets 131V-520-48P-S1

I am hoping that we can get some more tips from Lyndon and his spannerman John to use on the TTR250 forum (<http://autos.groups.yahoo.com/group/TTR250/>) as there cannot be much that can go wrong with the TTR that they haven't come across and solved.